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# Najib lists out priorities for Asean

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Member nations must ensure the people's needs form the core of development, says PM

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** Good governance, transparency and greater opportunities must count as top priorities for the governments of Asean member countries, said Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

The Prime Minister said higher standards of living, sustainable development, the empowerment of women and greater opportunity for all should also be put at the top agenda of Asean countries.

"The key to what we need to do in ensuring we have a People-Centred Asean is putting our citizens at the heart of Asean.

"We must put people's aspirations at the centre of our community-building," the Prime Minister said in his speech at Asean's 50th anniversary celebration held here yesterday.

Also present were Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman and International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Mustapa Mohamed.

Najib said he was very proud that during Malaysia's chairmanship in November 2015, Asean issued the Declaration on the Establishment of the Asean Community.

The Prime Minister said Asean

member countries must strive to make the regional grouping relevant and a tangible reality to their people.

He said member countries must raise awareness of Asean's history and achievements, and explain its future plans.

"This is so that one day we will think of ourselves not only as Malaysians, but also as people of Asean."

The Prime Minister said Asean's 50th anniversary was not just an important milestone but meant a great deal to him personally.

"This is because, as most of you will know, my father Tun Abdul Razak Hussein, who was then

Deputy Prime Minister, was one of the five founding fathers who signed the Bangkok Declaration," said Najib.

The Declaration, signed on Aug 8, 1967, is the founding document for Asean.

Najib said it was worth noting that the region back then was beset with many conflicts and troubles.

Since then, Asean has developed rapidly in terms of stability and economic development, he added.

"At the same time, we have maintained the spirit of friendship, taking decisions by consensus, and recognising the sovereignty of the individual countries.

"We unite in Asean but we don't

interfere in the internal affairs of our neighbours."

The Asean Way, as this approach is called, has brought stability and prosperity to the region, Najib said.

"Many authorities are now saying that it is a far more suitable model for us, and for other developing nations, than those of other regional associations that are now finding themselves troubled by division," added Najib.

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